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THE YOUNG MEN  
OF AMERICA



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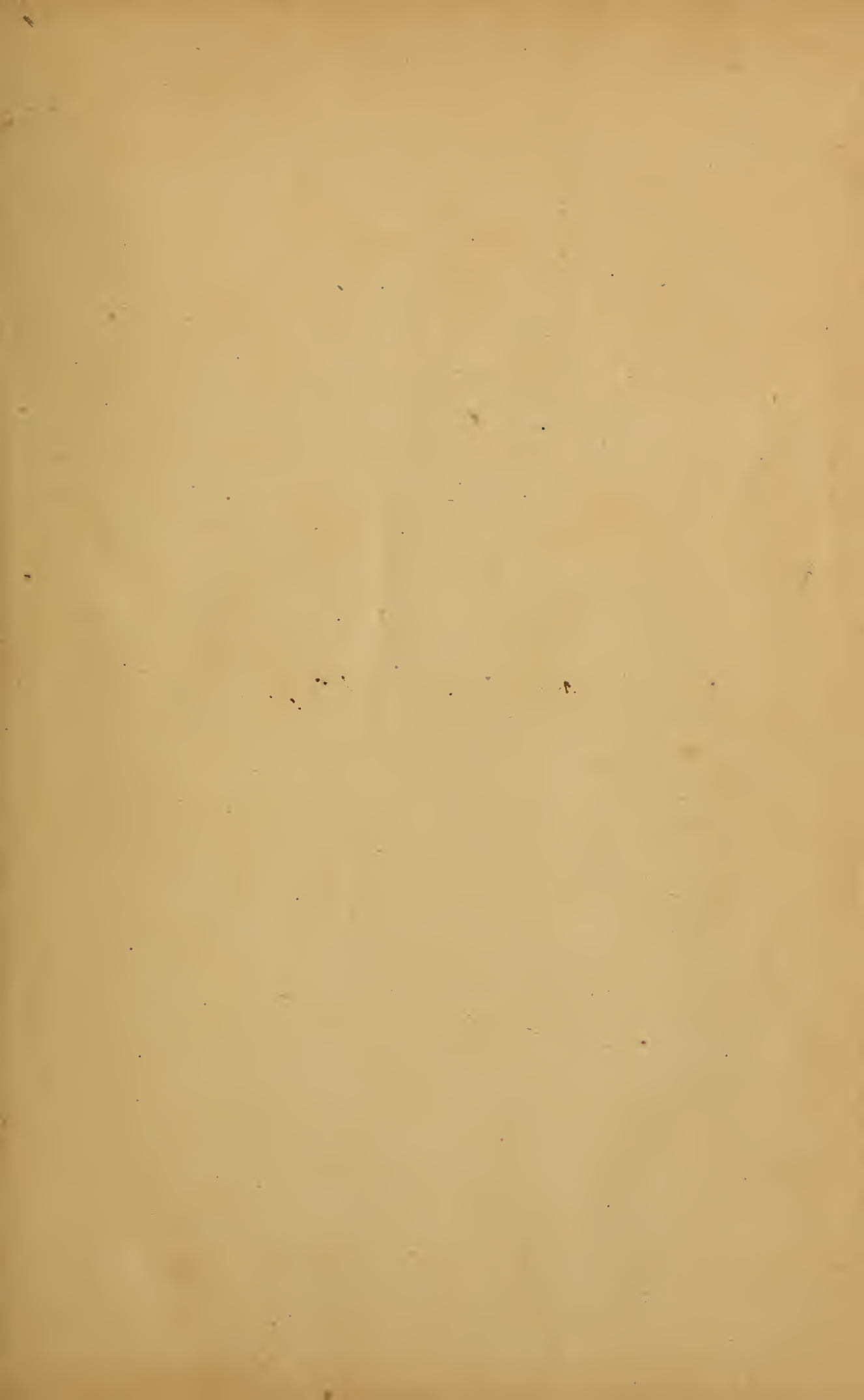
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THE  
Y O U N G M E N  
O F A M E R I C A .

A Prize Essay.

BY SAMUEL BATCHELDER, JR.

(REPRINTED FROM THE YOUNG MEN'S MAGAZINE)

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## PREMIUM OFFERED.

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NEW YORK, *October 1, 1857.*

The Editor of THE YOUNG MEN'S MAGAZINE, with a desire to incite the Young Men of America to a careful and thorough consideration of their responsible position before the world, and also to render the Magazine still more worthy their generous patronage, hereby offers a premium of ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS for the best ESSAY written for its pages, by a Young Man (resident in America, and under thirty years of age) upon

### THE YOUNG MEN OF AMERICA,

Considered in their several responsible relations, as follows, viz. :

- 1st. SOCIAL,
- 2d. MORAL AND RELIGIOUS,
- 3d. BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL,
- 4th. LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC.

The entire Essay to cover not more than thirty-five nor less than twenty-five pages of the Magazine.

The following well-known gentlemen have kindly consented to act as a Committee to examine the Essays submitted, and award the Premium according to their best judgment, viz. :

Professor HOWARD CROSBY, NEW YORK,  
Professor CHARLES MURRAY NAIRNE, NEW YORK,  
GEORGE H. STUART, Esq., PHILADELPHIA.

Competitors will direct their Manuscripts, by or before January 1, 1858, (each accompanied by a sealed note giving the full address of the writer, which note will not be opened unless the Essay receive the prize,) to

"PRIZE ESSAY COMMITTEE,

OFFICE OF THE YOUNG MEN'S MAGAZINE,

NEW YORK."

## PREMIUM AWARDED.

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NEW YORK, *January*, 23, 1858.

RICHARD C. McCORMICK, Esq., Editor, etc.

SIR:—The undersigned, appointed a committee to examine the essays on "The Young Men of America," submitted to THE YOUNG MEN'S MAGAZINE, and to award the premium to the most deserving, according to their best judgment, have performed the duty assigned them and render the following report:

Ten manuscripts were received, all (but one,) of which evinced careful thought and a just appreciation of the subject, together with high literary merit; of these your committee selected the manuscript marked No. 8, (motto "Festina lente") as especially combining clearness of expression and systematic division, with wholesome and vigorous sentiment, and as most completely answering the requirements of your prospectus. After coming to this decision, your committee on opening the accompanying letter, discovered the manuscript to be the production of SAMUEL BATCHELDER, Jr., of Cambridge, Mass., to whom they therefore unanimously award the prize of ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS, by you offered.

With much respect,

HOWARD CROSBY,

CHARLES MURRAY NAIRNE,

GEORGE H. STUART.

THE  
YOUNG MEN OF AMERICA.

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THE Republic, of which we are citizens, is instinct with the principle of youth; much of its soil has never felt the plough; its inhabitants are a mixed and heterogeneous multitude, not yet welded into a distinctive nationality; its institutions are, for the most part, the fresh growths of a hopeful present; its manners and habits of thought have scarcely yet received the impress of conventionality; time has hardly set his seal upon any work of man in the land, and throughout its length and breadth the nation is literally and emphatically rejoicing in "the newness of life."

Not the least interesting among the results of this condition of things is the peculiar sympathy developed between the State and her younger children. Nowhere is the young man called, nay, commanded to loftier duties and graver responsibilities, nowhere is he earlier

summoned to the toils, the trials and rewards of maturer life; his country's youth infuses his own with an added energy and vigor, awakens a generous enthusiasm, and quickens his patriotism with a warm and sympathetic thrill. She entreats his companionship and guidance in treading the unexplored pathways of that future, the common inheritance of both, along whose enchanting vista the eyes of each are longingly gazing,—too longingly and earnestly perhaps to credit the warnings of impending danger, of conditions to be fulfilled, and risks to be encountered, or to regard the monitions of an elder experience teaching that no possible grandeur of nations or of individuals is worth the employment of an unworthy means, or the sacrifice of a single honest impulse.

It is in view of the close connection which circumstances have thus established between the young men of America and the welfare and destiny of their country, that the study of the "several responsible relations" in which they are placed, becomes of the highest interest and importance. Not because we may hope thereby to furnish a panacea for existing evils, still less to establish inflexible dogmas, or to erect a rigid system of rules and principles applicable to every variety of case and condition, but simply because such an investigation in some shape has become a duty, almost a necessity, and because in the contact and attrition of many minds, some scintil-



lations of truth can scarcely fail to be elicited. Neither is it amiss that the subject should be regarded from various points of view, that young men should themselves give utterance to the fruits of their experience and reflection, thus contributing their quota to the common stock, which, if it serve merely to stimulate to closer and more careful research, and call forth the well-weighed and valuable opinions of their seniors, will not have been altogether wasted.

These relations present themselves to our consideration under four heads, viz.:—those which are

- I. SOCIAL,
- II. MORAL AND RELIGIOUS,
- III. BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL.
- IV. LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC.

According to this classification, we are to direct our attention—

I. To the young man of America as a member of Society. The word *society*, as applied to the association of individuals for the attainment and preservation of certain rights, benefits and privileges, has, in America, a meaning entirely its own. Its phenomena are bold and striking, constantly passing before our eyes with the blaze and rapidity of meteors, and equally mysterious in their origin and composition. Its structure, laws, disorders, needs and remedies, are complicated and difficult

of discernment, even to the catholic and comprehensive mind, prepared to enter upon the investigation in an impartial and painstaking spirit, and penetrating deeply down beneath the surface and show of its outer life to analyze the causes and principles in obedience to which it has developed, following up that development step by step to its latest phase. Such research, however, belongs to a distinct department of thought, and is alike beyond the limits, and foreign to the scope of the present paper : it must suffice to fix our attention briefly upon a few salient points more immediately connected with the topic under consideration.

And, first, we remark upon the results of that seeming contradiction between the theory and the fact respecting the *status* of citizens, more or less obvious in nearly all governments, and particularly so in republics, results which tell with peculiar force upon the younger members of the body politic.

The native equality of all men, which forms the fundamental doctrine of republican governments, society recognizes only in a political sense. To say this is only to say that theory is easier than practice, to complain of it is to quarrel with causes inherent in our nature. We might, indeed, go farther, and ask whether any other than a theoretical equality has ever existed among men, but our present concern is merely to trace the effects of

these opposite ideas of equality upon the young man in our country. Using the state as her mouth-piece she tells him, and tells him truly, "you were born upon American soil, (or have become entitled to American citizenship,) you are therefore the entire and perfect equal of each and every man around you; the administration of affairs is in your hands, and I recognize no duties or privileges, hereditary or otherwise, in any man or body of men different from your own; in effect, we are one,—'you are the State.'" Passing, then, from this lofty tone of address to that of more ordinary and familiar discourse, she assures him, with equal sincerity, if less directness and vehemence, that those brilliant natural gifts shall be duly rewarded, that his illustrious family name shall be a patent to her favor, and that she will by no means disregard that solid and shining equivalent which he offers as the purchase of some of her dearest honors.

Such is, substantially, the contradictory greeting with which society meets the young American at his entrance upon active life. He feels, however, that it involves no practical inconsistency, implies no real favoritism, and embodies no illiberal, exclusive spirit. He perceives that if it magnify the rewards of success, it throws her avenues open to all, and that it is, in fact, but an acknowledgment of that carefully adjusted equilibrium between



the democratic and aristocratic forces in the social body, by which each is rendered essential to the other, and the preponderance of either prevented. From this condition of things results an ambition of a peculiar stamp, an energy which has become proverbial, both stimulated to an eager pursuit of social distinction, which, because a *right* has become a *necessity*, the young man says within himself, "society sees in me a simple unit, in whom she recognizes nothing *in esse*, but everything *in posse* ; it is enjoined upon me to neglect no right ; to prove myself worthy of this is a right none the less positive and tangible than any of the civil privileges to which I am entitled,—not to claim it, not actually to enjoy it in some shape or other, is, in fact, a voluntary outlawry from the pale of civilization, a kind of social suicide." It follows that, where all are aspirants, and the conditions of success within the reach of all, the contest will not only be earnest and something more, but that the coveted rewards will at once be reached by a large number, and lose somewhat of their relative value. Upon two only of the more usually preferred claims to these rewards do we now propose to remark ; some of them may form the subject of subsequent discussion.

In democracies, political science receives an early and extended, if not a sound and healthy development. Every citizen is supposed to unite with the possession



of his privileges and immunities the knowledge and integrity requisite for their enjoyment and preservation, a presumption which is probably as near the truth in this country as elsewhere. But though every sailor who treads her deck be a commodore, the ship of state moves onward under the real command of but few among her nominal officers; because it is every man's business to compute her courses and reckonings, a tacit understanding has delegated the immediate responsibility of her navigation to those willing to assume it. Hence our race of politicians, ever ready to ease the people's shoulders from the burden of governing, and to parcel out among themselves such honors and emoluments as the administration of affairs, or other public station may afford. Along this road, and with these companions, society points the way to political eminence,—to the young American, usually a most alluring prospect. It is, as it were, his birth-right, his specialty, the career which education and circumstances seem to have marked out for him. Placed in a community keen to discover, and prompt to reward practical and available talent, thoroughly informed, through the medium of an untrammelled and copious press, on matters of public interest, and early accustomed to participate in discussions, and to take sides in the divisions which they occasion, he sometimes finds himself fairly embarked upon

the sea of politics, almost without knowing why or how.

Once there, however, and in the possession of office, how noble, how enviable is his position ; his duties may be many, his responsibilities onerous, but he is the accredited representative of the only absolutism on earth, the vicegerent of that power which knows no human superior. Nor is he a mere delegate of that power, but forms in his own private and personal capacity a component part thereof, thus sustaining, like his fellow citizens, the double relation of governor and governed. Abstractedly viewed, the picture is, indeed, one of such beauty and grandeur, that it is painful to pass from shadow to substance, from fiction to reality, to acknowledge, with a mortification the full bitterness of which can only be known to those reared among our institutions, that this much coveted distinction is, of all the honors which society can confer, the most cheapened, the most ephemeral, the most unsatisfying, the most abused. To point to the lessons of history, and the uniform experience of older states, to hint at the inseparable evils which swarm around the very name of "Commonwealth," is for us neither excuse nor palliation ;—though we may not reconstruct human nature, it is certainly possible to quicken those half-dormant perceptions, to nourish and develop those dwarfed and sluggish powers in the constituency,

which once in full and healthy activity should inaugurate a new order of things in the public service, creating at once a demand for and supply of those commoner virtues of private life—honesty and disinterested zeal—which should teach the selfish, the ignorant and the unscrupulous, the merchantable, if not the intrinsic value of patriotic endeavor, and subordinate the brief and barren triumphs of parties and of individuals to the general good of the whole people. Such considerations may be visionary, unpractical, Utopian, but they are forced upon us by evils terribly real, the precursors of civil calamities none can say how imminent and dire. If such are the legitimate and inevitable results of free institutions, we may indeed relapse into the apathy of despair, or seek simply to delay the ruin which we cannot avert, but we all, and especially the young men of the country, guardians of the unfolded destinies of the Republic, owe it to ourselves, to the great experiment in which we are engaged, to the eyes and hearts all the world over, that watch us as the gamester watches the last cast of the die, not to accept unproven assertion for proven fact, but to fulfil the whole duty of the citizen promptly and well, introducing into the conduct of public and political affairs the same ethical code which regulates the ordinary intercourse between man and man, and erecting a higher standard of honor both in the constituent and the repre-



sentative body. Good men and true we have, indeed, in the service of the state, as in that of the mart, the church, the forum and the field; men of incorruptible virtue, of enlightened statesmanship, of lofty, single-hearted patriotism; but we too often place snares and pitfalls in their way, we suffer the clamorous and plausible demagogue to thrust them aside, or send them unsupported to the encounter of fearful odds, yielding at last, it may be, the meed of their reluctant but well-earned honors to—their memories.

Let the young men of America ask themselves the nature and extent of their responsibility for such a condition of things as this. Have they, in the fresh exuberance of youthful vigor, flushed with the possession of full-grown political privileges, and giddy with the contemplation of the magnificent possibilities of the future, hurried onwards themselves, and urged others forward with inconsiderate haste? Have they given the more heed to the exercise of power, or to the accountability which its possession imposes? Have they hearkened to the seducing speech which addresses itself to their passions, their prejudices, their *youth*, or to the friendlier counsels of honest and disinterested advisers? Are they the originators of that free-masonry of party, that reckless, desperado school of political tactics which justifies the means in the end, and which cannot abide the inter-



ference of reason, moderation, or common justice? These are grave questions; they exhibit, perhaps, the darker aspects of a picture which wears many hues of a brighter cast, and glows with future promise, but it were well could an exculpatory answer be returned to each and every inquiry. Our younger citizens must take heed what character and direction they impart to the current which is sweeping us onward with such rapidity, remembering that with them it in a great measure rests so to guide and regulate its course as to secure the welfare and gratitude of their children, restoring, at the same time, official station to its true place in the public regard, by bringing forward a class of candidates worthy of its honors.

The relative amount of social distinction which the *mere possession* of wealth will secure in any given community, is ordinarily in the inverse ratio to the degree of culture therein, and to the attention bestowed upon pursuits of a less material kind. Hence, wherever the battles of civilization are still waging, and man is yet engaged in making good his domain over the opposing forces of nature, paying down, piece after piece, the price of that golden leisure beneath whose fructifying influence the more liberal and humanizing arts shall blossom and mature, we find the distinctions between money as a means and as an end less clearly appre-

hended, and society bestowing a fuller measure of homage upon the power which wealth confers, than upon the use to which that power is applied. Especially is this true, where hereditary rank is unknown, and the aristocracy of birth is not prominently brought either into combination or competition with the less subtle and inaccessible aristocracy of riches. With us, the prizes of the political arena are as nothing in comparison with those which the necessities and cupidity of man, and the bounty of nature have rendered possible to the feverish seeker after gain; which have lined the pathways of fortune with such vast multitudes as both to stimulate the desire and lessen the chances of individual success. Under such circumstances, the homelier virtues of prudence, economy and foresight languish and decay; the more ordinary and unpretending avocations are deserted for those whose returns, if less certain, are greater and more rapid, and trade gathers into its service an undue proportion of the young and vigorous *materiel* of the nation.

The possession of wealth being thus the corner-stone upon which so much of the fabric of our social order is made to rest, the criterion of success suffers a misapplication and perversion from its legitimate use; the young are early imbued with the prevailing spirit, and learn to assert the doctrine of *equality* by an ostentatious parade

of the external badges of prosperity, even though its substantial constituents be wanting, while the native independence of the national character is overlaid with a kind of false shame, unwilling gracefully to accept the necessary inequalities and gradations of social condition, and seeming almost to feel a sacrifice of personal right in the outward acknowledgment of superiority, even in that respect which, least of all others, deserves to be considered a test of real desert. Comparatively few have the moral courage voluntarily to take up with an honest, unambitious competency, although from the more even distribution of property it is necessarily the lot of by far the larger number. In all this there is, it may be, matter for congratulation as well as for regret, for we trace therein the natural working of some causes which we would not, if we could, annul, and of institutions in which we feel an honest and honorable pride. It were well, however, to remember that there are disorders which spring from a superabundance of vital energy, as well as others which fasten themselves upon a decrepit and decaying organization, and that those to whom the administration of the appropriate remedies is entrusted may not safely neglect so important a duty.

But society, if at times a generous patron, is always an exacting taskmaster, and though she shows herself with us prompt to discover and reward intellectual and moral



worth, as well as success of the vulgar and material sort, she takes care that all, whether careless or ambitious of her honors, shall understand the reciprocity of obligation she imposes. Having, by noble educational systems, deputed to the state the office of imparting to the embryo citizen the mental discipline requisite for the proper use and enjoyment of his privileges, and of discharging the varied and responsible functions of his condition, she looks for a fitting return for her fostering and impartial care, and feels that some practical acknowledgment is due from the man to whom she has, in youth, faithfully extended the means of improvement, and the protection of equal laws; that her early encouragement and assistance should elicit something better than unprofitable gratitude. There is great danger that this sense of individual responsibility and obligation for benefits common to all, should be lost sight of, simply because of their wide and equal distribution; and in this very forgetfulness, or rather insensibility, lies the cause of many social disorders. A certain kind of enthusiasm, indeed, a sentimental admiration of, and desire for the perpetuation of those institutions which have made us what we are, and of whose kindly influences we are all sensible, is sufficiently common, but there is much reason to believe it, in many cases, a "zeal not according to knowledge." If we are to continue in possession of these blessings, conti-



nually rendering ourselves more worthy of them, and them of us, we must recollect that they are something more than mere matters for mutual felicitation or boastful talk, or the convenient watch-words of party warfare; that they are topics for careful study, for earnest thought, not of that "pale cast" in which our "enterprises of great pith and moment" shall "lose the name of action," but of that sober sort which their greatness deserves, and which is equally indispensable to their full comprehension, and their use, increase and preservation; and that upon each of us, especially at his entrance upon the rich inheritance prepared for him, devolves a share,—infinitesimal it may be, but still a share,—of this duty, not capable of being delegated to any man, or any association of men, but strictly personal and individual. It seems, at first sight, a strange anomaly that where the means of intellectual culture are so widely diffused, and knowledge is within the reach of the humblest, that the land should be overrun with shams, and pretenders and pretences abound, but the reason probably consists in the necessity which wilful ignorance experiences of clothing itself in the semblance of wisdom, or of adopting some other mode of concealment. Error has learned to assume her most dangerous and cunning disguises, and instead of urging her way by physical force, or by direct appeals to human prejudice and passion, she now insi-

nuates her fatal mischiefs by flattering the intolerable conceit of those, who, in an age of enlightenment, are too indolent to stretch forth the hand for the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and too cowardly to avow their mental emptiness before men. The opportunity of proficiency, not only in the fundamental departments of ordinary education, but in those which are higher and more abstract, even in the wonderful and mysterious processes whereby the laws of matter and of mind are laid open to human comprehension, is so patent and familiar a privilege, that the charlatan plies his trade with the double advantage of having both the presumption of truth and character on his side, and the vain and timid, as well as the ignorant, for his victims.

The will and the power to unmask his pleasing wiles are too seldom found united in the person of the better informed, for to contend with the united forces of knavery and folly demands not only a wise head, but a stout heart, a cool temper, great knowledge of human nature, and philanthropic instincts of no common range and intensity; moreover, it is the business of no one in particular to supply the omissions, or correct the mistakes of early nurture; the school is looked upon as the only agency, its teacher the only potentate accountable for the quantity and quality of the mental equipment with which the young man sets forth upon his journey.

What society in reality demands of all, especially her younger members, is a close and thorough correspondence between means and results, between powers and their employment, gifts and their use. There is a tendency among us to deal with the subject of mental and moral education in the aggregate, as a thing merely of public and political concern, a good to be reached by combined and organized effort, to the disregard of private and special training, and of those many humble instrumentalities which immediately surround us;—the sweet and wholesome influences of home, and the thousand nameless forces and operations of domestic life are under-estimated, and reckoned as simply subsidiary to the vast and ingeniously-constructed mechanism with whose aid we think to develop the many-sided product man, and turn out the completed article of any required pattern on an illimitable scale. Hence a disturbance in the nice adjustment of the several constituent parts of our humanity, a dwarfing of a certain set of powers and faculties to make room for the growth of the rest;—the benumbed requirements and capabilities grope blindly for the light, and perhaps reach at last a partial and imperfect development, but the character is lacking in certain ingredients which, earlier provided, would have overruled or modified the appetite for coarse or criminal pleasures, the apathetic languor, the misguided, un-



hallowed ambition for which the largest and most brilliant intellectual attainments are no compensation—nay, which are never so potent for evil as when linked with an extended and thorough culture.

To combat such mischiefs as these, growing out of the peculiar circumstances and constitution of American society, stamping upon many of its phases an aspect sad and perplexing, alike to the philosophical, and to the casual and ordinary observer, must commend itself as a duty of immediate and pressing urgency. It is obvious, however, that in studying the nature of this duty, its attendant difficulties, and the best modes of accomplishing the desired end, we penetrate at once below the mere social surface, and beyond all positive human institutions, to the great, all-encompassing principles of the divine and spiritual economy, and touch upon those deeper questions of ethical science into which nearly all such topics are resolvable, and under the form of which their only satisfactory elucidation is to be attained. We are thus brought to the consideration of the moral and religious relations of our young men, in other words, to the contemplation of,

II. The young man of America as a moral agent. In this connection regard may be had, first, to his peculiar dangers, and, secondly, to his peculiar opportunities.

Whatever theory we may see fit to adopt with respect

to the culture of the understanding, few can doubt that the work of evolving and perfecting the moral sense is, in its inception, cotemporaneous with the earliest dawns of intelligence, and is largely dependent for its accomplishment upon the tender, watchful and persistent care of natural guardians in the nursery and the family. The well-digested and faithfully-imparted precepts which mingle with secular teaching, and which find a more direct and special utterance in the Bible class and the Sunday school, are powerful, and never-to-be-omitted means of good, particularly to the homeless and neglected; but they are nevertheless more or less limited in their sphere of operation, contracted within narrow boundaries of time and place, and unable to derive much support from that grand instructor—example. But home is, unfortunately, one of our least used and least appreciated educational agencies for the young of either sex, more especially the male; a thousand malignant influences combine to drive the young man from its secure asylum, many of them causes independent of his own volition, while home itself, there is reason to fear, he may not always find rich in those refining and strengthening influences which it is both its privilege and duty to exert, but with its pure flame dimmed, or wholly extinguished, in the fierce glare of ostentatious folly, or domestic estrangement and dissension. He is summoned,

✓ moreover, often by absolute necessity, and always by public opinion, to mingle in the active business and concerns of life earlier than usual in other countries, and obliged, by the more equal distribution of social responsibilities, to participate in the struggles of the outer world at an age when not a few of his cotemporaries elsewhere are still engaged in preparation for the encounter. He is thus thrown much upon his own resources, and becoming prematurely acquainted with the sweets of liberty and power, is apt to fancy himself emancipated from all control, human and divine, while the perilous contagion of vice is particularly dangerous to one at the same time vain of his own knowledge and strength, and keenly susceptible to the varied blandishments of temptation, and the magnetic sympathy of example; occasional acts of indulgence gradually ripen into habits, and even the legitimate uses of recreation, both mental and bodily, degenerate into abuses.

It will be inferred from what has been said, that the great moral peril of the young man in this country, the parent of many more, lies in the *lack of self-control*. Wanting in power over the evil passions and affections, the secret of whose mastery should have been implanted and enforced in infancy, excess becomes the normal, moderation the exceptional principle of conduct. This is no less conspicuous in the evils endured, than in



the remedies administered; extremes are combated by extremes,—men are to be rendered wise and virtuous by legal enactments, and hard, mechanical, superficial schemes are substituted for the natural and kindly operation of those forces and instrumentalities prescribed by the Maker, for the regulation and perfecting of His work. The discipline of the passions and appetites must thus be contemplated from a religious point of view, if we seek to understand its true nature, methods and importance. That religious means and motives are the only ones to be relied on for compassing this end, is obvious from the fact that they alone are operative upon the hidden springs of thought and conduct, permeating and pervading the whole inward life; for the self-control which arises from a mere desire of external conformity to received notions of right, and of making a decent show before the world, all which morality alone might and does inculcate, is not, it is quite unnecessary to say, of the kind here intended. For it is important not to narrow down the graces of this self-control to certain negative advantages, contenting ourselves with enumerating the evils from which it frees us, but rather to view it as being in itself a great and positive good, valuable as a principle of action, and deserving of assiduous cultivation for its own sake, whatever may be the opportunities for its exercise, or the tangible results attained by its aid.

How nobly such a quality fills up the idea of a completed manhood, as opposed to the condition of the lower orders of creation, unwitting nature's law; and incapable of moral accountability! How symmetrical and finely proportioned is the character gradually developed under its influence, native defects repaired, native strength preserved and augmented by economical and judicious use, and every part trained to its proper function in subordination to the main design! How important that the arbiters of political destiny should first gain the mastery over their own spirits! How inglorious, in the contest in which we are called upon to engage, and on whose issue so much is at stake, will be the campaigns of him who parleys with spies, and holds counsel with traitors!

We have seen how the peculiar conditions and circumstances of our national existence conspire to render the acquisition and exercise of this virtue more than ordinarily rare and difficult, while it is, for precisely these reasons, more than ordinarily necessary. We have also seen that it must be early implanted, and that by religious methods, if it is to be of permanent value and utility. How materially lightened would then be the labors of the reformer; what diminution and modification would result in the objects and scope of modern reform! The bounties of nature and providence, and

innumerable sources of innocent enjoyment and rational gratification, would less require the vigilant censorship of self-constituted and complacent guardians of public virtue; and the remedial treatment which human depravity requires having thus been applied at the root and source of the malady, instead of being used to check the outward developments, success, if not rendered more certain, would at least have been sought by more rational and legitimate methods.

But there remains another danger of quite another sort to the young American as a moral agent, a danger lurking in the very heart of one of his dearest and most boasted privileges. The revealed will of God, one consistent, harmonious, unalterable law, committed to a united organism, His church, for perpetual dissemination and preservation;—innumerable associations of individuals bearing different names, and professing widely different doctrines, yet each claiming to be in possession of the whole counsel of God;—such is the strange, perplexing problem presented for his solution. It is true that the particular bias imparted in childhood or early youth may, and often does, leave no room for over-curious speculation, and diverts the spirit of private inquiry; but to nearly all religious thinkers comes the desire, more or less constant and powerful, of personal exploration along the giddy and tortuous paths of theological



science. His religious life must be, outwardly at least, identified with some one of these organized bodies, while no prestige of political influence or ecclesiastical authority must interfere with his liberty of choice. Under such circumstances it is not strange that religious self-complacency or indifference should sometimes be witnessed ; that the mind, according to its more or less keen perception of the absolutism and indivisibility of religious truth, should shrivel into bigotry, or bloat into latitudinarianism, or that downright skepticism should be welcomed as a happy escape from the chaos of doubts and fears environing belief.

Hence, too, the pernicious error, that sincerity is the only material part of religious faith, or as it is commonly expressed, that it matters not what a man's peculiar belief may be, so long as he is sincere therein, and fully acts up to his conscientious convictions,—a doctrine whose thorough and consistent development would commit us to the indorsement of some of the most atrocious principles and practices which have disfigured the records of history, and compel our admiration of men whose lives have been little else than a tissue of folly, weakness and crime. A more accurate understanding of the functions of conscience would show us, that in its healthy, unperverted condition its promptings are entirely in harmony with those few and simple, yet all comprehensive divine

injunctions whose binding force and obligation are universally acknowledged, which compose the soul and substance of all religions, and without a theoretical acquiescence in which, society would become disintegrated, and the social compact disannulled. That the voice of God in the soul should really contradict His revealed will is an assertion too impious and shocking to deserve a moment's thought, while we may solace ourselves with the reflection, that the points regarding which the teachings of Scripture and the dictates of enlightened reason are less unequivocal, are sufficiently numerous to render it wholly unnecessary to seek to enlarge the already almost limitless fields of inquiry over which this much-prized liberty of conscience may fitly and freely range. Multiplied and varied as are the forms of religious faith and worship, to each and every one is set bounds which it cannot pass; to each appertains the inheritance of a divine revelation, and upon each are impressed certain features essential to its very existence as a *religious* system, and around which, as the fixed and central ideas in every creed are clustered the special tenets which distinguish it from every other,—doctrines, it may be, of great importance as characteristic badges, but which are sometimes only misconceived or undeveloped truths, whose antagonism not unfrequently lessens upon a closer investigation and more careful comparison. The liberty of

conscience which claims the right, in the just and proper exercise of the reasoning faculties, of prosecuting its reverent inquiries in this direction, and of testing whatever it meets by sound and acknowledged standards, is engaged in its legitimate function ;—overstepping this divinely-erected barrier, liberty degenerates into license, and its lofty claims and pretenses crumble away into worse than utter nothingness.

We have a tacit recognition of these principles in the attitude assumed by the State, which declines all interference with the rights and duties of its citizens in matters spiritual, except so far as the manner of exercising the same may conflict with public order or municipal right. It assumes a degree of intelligence in the community adequate to the proper use of religious as well as of political freedom ; that the rudimentary principles of the divine and human law are equally familiar, and the peculiar character of each as *law* fully understood. Upon the discussion of the many interesting topics respecting the relations of church and state it is impossible here to enter ; it may be that idiosyncrasies of temperament, of education, and of historical and traditional association have imparted some bias to our perceptions and judgments in matters of this sort, but however that may be, it is certain that nothing in the freedom which we enjoy, or in the consequent multipli-



cation of the forms of religious belief, can justify the young American in the extravagant theories and unfounded conclusions into which he is liable to be betrayed by the ceaseless outcry about liberty of conscience, or still less excuse his neglect of any moral or religious duty.

From such contemplations as these it is pleasant to turn to the opportunities of good, perhaps not less marked than the temptations to evil, which the peculiar religious condition of the country affords its young men. The seeds and elements of truth which exist in greater or less proportion in every denominational organism, we know must increase and develop, freeing themselves, little by little, from the admixture of error which now debases and retards their divine vitality, and gradually demolishing in the process the barriers which now separate those who see and know but in part, until the bestowal in fuller measure of knowledge, faith and love shall have brought about a religious unity as nearly perfect as human imperfection, and the circumstances of our mundane existence will admit. For such an eliminative process it is difficult to conceive of a fairer field, or more auspicious influences than are here presented. The preponderance of any one or more systems of doctrine is prevented, and a wholesome equipoise maintained, by the more equal distribution of religious forces and ener-

gies. That charity which grows up between those who, differing in opinion, have faith in each other's honesty of purpose, and are on a perfect equality in the eye of the law and in the favor of society, has already worked, and is still working, results excellent in themselves, and rich with future promise. Upon the strong and deep-running current of this tendency of our religious life, congenial, in so many ways, and for so many reasons, to the ingenuous spirit of youth, the young man throws himself with a devotedness of purpose which, properly seconded and judiciously directed, cannot fail of happy consequences. The friendly rivalry, engendered in the contact of diverse systems of belief and worship, the necessity felt by each of making good its claim to Christian sympathy and fellowship, and the consequent demand for the active and earnest co-operation of every worker within its pale, awaken his interest, and stimulate his zeal. The fearful odds to be encountered in the contest with the opposing forces of worldliness serves but to rouse the manliness of his nature, to reinforce his powers of resistance, and to quicken the responsive thrill with which he listens to the apostolic injunction: "I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong." The ignorant are to be taught,—in his soul the fountains of knowledge, if less deep and various, are at least freshly unsealed, and for the most part uncontaminated with the

bitter ingredients which maturing years shall perforce commingle; the needy and afflicted are to be relieved,—his warm and generous instincts are especially alive to every form of suffering; the fallen are to be raised, the wavering reclaimed, the sore temptations which beset the path of the young are to be removed or counteracted, how valuable is the assistance, the friendly advice and companionship of those who have met and learned to master the same evil influences. The necessary routine duties which belong to the secular departments of ecclesiastical labor fall naturally to the share of those whose time is, perhaps, less valuable, and whose hands more ready, than is always the case with older men.

The native power of example, always great, is indefinitely augmented by such a condition of things, and if we lament its evil effects, we should credit it with all the good which we owe to its instrumentality. Its operation is of course most plainly perceptible where great numbers are congregated,—in cities, in the dépôts of trade and commerce, and in all populous marts, where the pursuit of gain has gathered many into a common focus, and human life, with all things pertaining thereto, becomes quickened and intensified. An encouraging sign is witnessed in the formation of associations of young men for religious and moral objects, on a similar plan to that of societies more immediately designed for intellec-



tual improvement,—a scheme which has thus far been attended with the happiest results. Religious principles early implanted, which the thousand distracting and dangerous influences of city life would otherwise have weakened or destroyed, are thus strengthened and preserved; the young man, separated from home and friends, is brought into better companionship, and surrounded with associations of a higher character; the spark of heavenly fire which in solitude might have been extinguished, is fanned into life, and in contact with suitable material kindles into a warm and brilliant flame. As a continuation into a most critical period of life of early religious nurture, supplying to some extent the lack of home and its protections, the Young Men's Christian Association takes rank among the most efficient and important religious agencies of the time; doing its work in an unobtrusive, but effectual manner; acting upon a class of persons who occupy a certain situation where its interposition is most timely and valuable, and bringing into play much intelligent and benevolent activity which had else been lost or misdirected.

Akin to this, is the young American's duty and privilege in the application of religious correctives to politico-social evils. The axiom that knowledge and virtue are the only safeguards of a state, means simply that nations, like individuals, are dependent on the fulness

of the sacred and secular instruction they receive, to enable them to meet the duties, and overcome the dangers of their position. Education of the latter sort it is in the power, as it is generally the duty of government to provide: many obstacles interpose to render the inculcation of religious truth by the machinery of municipal regulations a matter of much practical difficulty. The organic law in many of the confederated republics of our Union has extended the blessings of knowledge to all alike, while the voluntary effort and organization of individuals have introduced the institutions and benefits of the Christian religion over at least an equal area. The state, though not taking any immediate part in these labors, indirectly countenances and assists them in every way which is consistent with her pledged religious neutrality, and directly recognizes the truth, and bases her polity upon the precepts of the Gospel. Further than this she may not go, but this is only the husk and outline of what Christianity *should* be as a political power, a great nutritive and conservative social element; what it *is* we may ask ourselves, and trust to our own observation for the answer; certainly the source of immense advantage, yet very far from vindicating her just claim to rank as the central force and vitalizing ingredient of civilization. And why is this, but that her precepts are not practically regarded as of equal importance, in the curricu-

lum of learning with instruction in secular knowledge? Well-educated men, in the common acceptation of the term, we have in abundance, but a good education is not the sole staple for the production of patriots, of statesmen, or even of citizens. There are no more astute or influential demagogues, no men more selfish and indifferent, content to forego all public duty in the pursuit of private gain, than are to be found among those whose intellectual harness gleams impenetrably bright. There must be preaching and teaching out of the pulpit as well as in it. There is work for the laity as well as for the clergy, by precept and example, by voice and by pen, by advice and by assistance, by every avenue of influence, direct and indirect, to fill up and complete the scheme of Christian instruction, establishing it upon a scale equal in magnitude and usefulness to that whereby provision is made for mental growth and nourishment, and realizing thus what we cannot doubt to have been the hope and expectation of the founders of our constitutional order. The church can deal only with the individual conscience, and in no other way, with us, can she oppose herself to the inflowing tide of political corruption and moral and social degeneracy, than by the voluntary efforts of those who will give their time and their talents to the work. The selfish and dishonorable devices, the unscrupulous turpitude which disgrace the



career of our public life both in the givers and receivers of its rewards, and sully our national honor, is not because we are ignorant of our duty, but because a cloud of moral darkness, which leads us to regard such a state of things as inevitable, or even harmless in political affairs, has settled down upon the land; and because we have a large class of men, many of them young men, particularly numerous in cities, ignorant in many ways, and degraded by vicious courses of many kinds, but whose weight as a mischievous and disturbing social and political element, lies in their almost absolute exclusion from the pale of Christian interest, Christian influence, and Christian labor. Among these men, and still more among those who are growing up to take their places, is the true field of the patriot philanthropist. The votes which are now bartered for official indulgence shown to offences against the well-being of society, carelessly or selfishly cast, or coolly neglected, must be restored to the hands of freemen jealous of political dignity and welfare, and not only asking no indulgence for their own, but resolved to curb the evil passions of others; the contagion of a high moral purpose, of just and elevated views of our public responsibilities, and of the true conditions and objects of self-government, must come to infect the whole community. Much of this work can be done, much of it can only be done by young men; the perse-

vering employment of personal influence and example is mainly to be depended on, but the controlling motive which must govern all effort, which must animate the hearts and souls of the teachers, and from them pass over into those of the taught, lies not in reasons of public policy, or even in merely moral considerations,—it must spring from the very deepest religious conviction, the purest religious principle, the deeper and purer the more base and degraded are they who need its interposition.

A practical and universal recognition must be established of the truth, that God is with us nationally as well as individually, and that it is only in keeping His commandments that we may look for public, as well as private welfare.

III. We come next to the discussion of those relations which grow out of business, profession, or occupation in life ; or, as it may be otherwise expressed, to the consideration of

#### THE YOUNG MAN OF AMERICA AS AN INDUSTRIAL AGENT.

That there is work for him to do—genuine hard work, and plenty of it,—work for the hand and for the brain ; work which he may find congenial or distasteful ; work which comes to him from others, or which he has pro-

vided for himself; work which may yield a rich or a scanty return, is one of the earliest facts which impresses itself upon the mind of the American. While to the great majority, necessity has pronounced the decree of constant toil, the comparative few who are nurtured in affluence usually feel it both convenient and desirable to render at least an outward conformity to the prevailing current of public opinion. So frequent, sudden, and complete are the revolutions of fortune with us, as scarcely to have allowed of the formation of a class securely seated in the enjoyment of an absolute and cultivated leisure, and it may well be doubted, not only whether there be any class, but any individuals, even, among us so situated as not to derive a positive and direct advantage from the knowledge and practice of some useful and honest calling. Labor has thus acquired a dignity altogether beyond what has elsewhere and heretofore been associated with it; many pursuits, which were once hardly considered compatible with a conventional respectability are now in high favor, and boast the assiduous devotion of some of the most gifted minds in the community. There is little feeling of any especial prestige connected with certain employments, for though it is true that those which demand or imply the possession of more or less learning and intellectual training have here, as elsewhere, the weight of influence, and a



freely acknowledged superiority of function ; yet these qualifications are too common and accessible to be made the basis of any extraordinary claims. Indeed, so general is the diffusion of information, and so large the measure of natural intelligence and skill, as to elevate the character and widen the sphere of almost all the several avocations, and render the transition from those of a lower to those of a higher grade easy and constant. We may regret the unstable and variable habits, mental and bodily, which these facilities for change of occupation tend to occasion, while we acknowledge the passage from the duties and rewards of the humbler, to those of the more difficult and responsible calling, or even the exchange of one pursuit for another, requiring preparation not wholly dissimilar in kind or degree, to be more in harmony with the genius and temper, not merely of our country, but of our age, than an inflexible persistence in an unsuitable and uncongenial career from pusillanimity, indolence, or unworthy pride, and that a man thus earlier reaches, and better preserves his true level, ascertains his actual industrial value, and accomplishes his portion of the world's work, than when less free to exercise a careful and mature selection.

The consideration of the young American's peculiar position and duties as a member of the great industrial commonwealth, the true method and spirit in which

these duties should be discharged, and the real objects to be aimed at in their performance, comes home to us as a thing of no small importance. Especially at the present time, when the questions—how are we laboring, and what is the final good which we propose as the end of all our exertions—are so pointedly brought before us by the many and terrible disasters which we are witnessing on every side,—when the bright and well-founded expectations of youth, the prosperous harvests of the riper in years, and the long-gathering accumulations of age have become involved in a common ruin, and a devastating tempest has swept over the business interests of the country, leaving behind the disheartening evidences of its fury in prostrated energies, disappointed hopes, scattered fortunes, and darkened homes. Well knowing that we must look many ways, and examine with patient and long-continued research for the causes of these melancholy results, we cannot close our eyes to the parallel fact, that a large share of the prosecution and active management of the business concerns of the country has of late, especially in the newer portions of the republic, been in the hands of those not yet arrived at maturity. The American, if he possess no other birthright, soon becomes conscious of his heirship to that species of public confidence and favor which is not averse to the substantial encouragement of youth, the

result, as it might seem, of a wide-spread and almost instinctive sense of the need of those qualities with which it is believed to be especially gifted,—an inheritance which the fortunate possessor, with the ardent impetuosity of his age, eagerly grasps, and hastens to enjoy to the utmost. He is thus half-enticed, half-driven to the front of the battle, and not unfrequently finds himself invested with responsibilities requiring a veteran experience, and a maturity of judgment beyond his years, the natural consequence of which is either a precocious development of the required powers, liable to be succeeded by a premature decay, or else a very partial and imperfect realization of highly raised expectations; the former being, perhaps, the more common, as the result for which there are many predisposing causes;—we have thus grown accustomed to seeing the stations which might be thought proper only to the fathers in possession of the children, to hear the words of grave and confident judgment, which age alone seemed competent to utter, on the lips of youth, and to find the evil as well as the useful and valuable experiences which time confers cleverly counterfeited by juvenile pretenders.

If this be, as some have believed, a deep-seated and dangerous social disease, and one among the many causes of recent financial calamities, we cannot visit it with too severe reprobation, or apply ourselves too soon



to the work of reform. An unsightly and threatening sore it assuredly is, but however great may be our vexation or our evil forebodings, it is not impossible that it may be classed among those disorders which work their own cure, leaving the patient sounder than before; indeed, its phenomena are perhaps only the excrescences and crudities of a providentially-appointed system of political and industrial development. The leading part which the young man is called upon to assume in conducting this development implies the existence at once of a peculiar class of duties, and of a complementary class of capacities; it bears witness to the hopeful ardor, the facile skill, the constructive energy, the sympathetic zeal marshalled for the encounter of untried and unexpected difficulties, of tasks of unusual magnitude, and of problems requiring new formulas for their solution; it infuses something of patriotic purpose into the routine of common employments, and if he is sometimes betrayed by it into a boastful egotism, it affords him at the same time abundant extenuation. To develop the resources and nurse the strength and glory of his country, is by no means a forgotten object, or an unfamiliar consideration, though one which we could wish to see, in its best and highest aspects, still more generally entertained and acted on. The young merchant should see not merely the ventures of private enterprise in the ships

which he sends across the deep, but the messengers and ministers of a commerce which is bearing the flag, and introducing the productions of his native land to the remotest corners of the globe, and feel himself to be a creator and regulator of a code of rules and principles calculated to meet the peculiar conditions and requirements of a vast and rapidly-expanding commercial system. Extreme solicitude is befitting those who are entering upon a professional career, that the standard of learning, of usefulness, and of scholarly and gentlemanly culture is not lowered by reason of great numerical accessions; for the young divine, the young lawyer, the young physician, a wide and promising field awaits the tillage of diligent hands and tempers imbued with the spirit of conservatism and reform in just and happy mixture; while a familiar acquaintance with the wisdom of antiquity, and a due reverence for grim-visaged precedent must supply the foundation and framework of his professional edifice; its finish, and the details of its arrangement, in short, the whole scheme of its adaptation to the needs and idiosyncrasies of modern American civilization remains for individual genius, industry, and acumen. The same is also true of divers other occupations which require the union of theoretical knowledge with practical talent; there is, in fact, hardly any calling, however humble and subordinate, which does not impose

upon the young American engaged in it special obligations and responsibilities.

We are pre-eminently a hard-working people, laborious alike from temperament and necessity; the conviction that toil is to be the purchase of our national apotheosis is general; the strength and power of bone, and brain, and muscle, and their faculty of continuous and profitable, nay, more, of early and rapid action, is the grand idol of our social worship; hence erroneous ideas respecting the value, employment, and true economy of time. It is deemed desirable that the boy should early commence, and continue with unintermitting industry, laying the foundations of his future career, that the special training which it requires should immediately follow, to be undergone with equal assiduity, and that little, if any, pause or breathing-time should be allowed so long as aught of mental or physical ability remains. One of the necessary consequences of this is seen in the want of thoroughness and permanence in the attainments themselves, and the superficial mode of their acquisition; in our zeal and haste to lengthen the catalogue of our positive qualifications, we overlook the important truth, that, within certain limits, the broader the basis, the more careful, judicious and catholic the taste displayed in the selection of materials, and the more deliberate the process of construction, the more durable and sightly the



edifice becomes; that the human mind is not simply a receptacle of a certain number of facts, to be stored away for use as occasion may require, but a wonderful automatic power, a mysterious and vital organism, whose value and usefulness is dependent rather upon the range and flexibility which it has acquired, the readiness with which it adapts itself to, and the force and persistency which it can bring to bear upon any particular subject, or class of subjects, and the comprehensive and copious energy which it evinces,—in a single word, upon its *discipline*, than upon the number of its positive attainments. A man is none the worse physician, tradesman, engineer, architect, lawyer, artist, merchant, or mechanic for an early and devoted cultivation of æsthetic, scientific or literary tastes, for making himself familiar with any of the wonderful, curious, or beautiful works of nature or human skill, for attentively studying the strange and instructive lessons of history, or for treading with reverent and ever-new delight in the footsteps of a wise and beneficent Creator, as displayed by the research which unfolds to us so many of the secrets of the visible and invisible universe. The common round of daily toil is then approached with different feelings, engaged in with a different spirit, and finished with another sort of satisfaction than before,—it is no longer a wearisome, mechanical drudgery, but an interesting and pleasurable

exercise of the awakened faculties. The work, too, is more successfully as well as more pleasantly performed ; unexpected analogies and facilities present themselves, hidden resemblances are disclosed, familiar rules and principles are invested with fresh and larger meanings, newer and better methods and results replace the old. Or, if the stated avocation be distasteful or uncongenial, the brief intervals of release from its exactions are so many golden opportunities for the admission of ennobling and refining influences, and the gratification of elevated tastes, instead of being spent in apathetic languor, or debasing pleasures ; the appointed tasks are resumed with invigorated powers, to be despatched with an industry that shall soon purchase another interval of well-earned and precious leisure.

It is exceedingly important to remember, in the midst of this hurrying, impatient age, the value of a large and generous culture in the humblest fields of human labor, as well as in the so-called liberal professions. Our country never stood more in need of really and thoroughly educated men, men of rounded and healthy mental constitution, who can look many ways, and perceive the many sides of every question ; neither rash nor timid, but with every nerve braced, every sense on the alert, and every faculty ready for instant action ; men, who, whatever may be their particular calling, have made it

their servant, not their master, and can grasp the relative bearings of kindred and diverse pursuits, who can at pleasure point the glass to one especial orb, or survey with comprehensive eye the studded firmament. Though we can hardly be considered amenable to the charge of narrowness or illiberality of temper, or reckoned deficient in versatility or appreciative power, we are lacking, nevertheless, in that affluence of mental habit, that far-reaching scope of information which expands and dignifies our distinctive employment, which removes it the farthest from an unreasoning, and approximates it most closely to a rational process, which infuses, (to speak it reverently,) into the round of our daily and necessary duty somewhat of that creative effort which betokens the divine origin of the human soul, and practically recognizes and illustrates the native beauty and nobility of labor.

IV. The last class of relations to which our attention will be directed, includes those which are of a literary and scientific character; it may be generalized under the style of

#### THE YOUNG MAN OF AMERICA INTELLECTUALLY CONSIDERED.

With us, as has already been remarked, the mind is



perhaps the best cared for of any part of our nature, and the attempt has been made to point out some of the causes and consequences of this fact; our republican institutions, and prominent among them, our system of popular education, the free intercourse, keen and active competition of our business and social life, and the universal recognition and substantial advantages afforded to intellectual culture, have raised it to a high place in public estimation, fostering and stimulating its growth. It must, however, be confessed, that as yet many of its forms are such as bear rather upon the practical concerns and interests of life, and that in its more abstract and æsthetic branches much still remains to be accomplished; hence the earnestness and directness of tone perceptible in our literature, and the comparative absence of works of philosophic and speculative thought.

The literary tastes of a people are not inaptly mirrored in those of its young men, who, in a country like our own, both lead and follow the popular judgment. The description of productions most readily welcomed by them, and in general by the American public, well illustrates the position that literary effort tends simultaneously in two directions, the one coincident with, the other reactionary from prevailing national traits. Next to the pleasure which our countrymen derive from movement and action, is that obtainable from the knowledge

of what others have done or are doing, or by what methods we may, to the best advantage, direct our energies; the history of our own country and of those from which we derive our origin, the narratives of travel and discovery, biographies, the complexities of statecraft, and the records of inventive genius and skill possess for many almost an exclusive interest; they carry into literature that absorbing devotion to the real and the actual characteristic of our age and nation, they measure the worth of what they read by the closeness of its adherence to fact, and apply the criterion of practical utility as their chief canon of criticism. On the other hand, to minds of a different organization the material and realistic tendencies of the world without serve but to quicken into life a world within, a world where the harsh contrasts, the uninviting duties, the stern truths and stubborn facts of this have no place, a realm which is "of imagination all compact," peopled only with unrealities and shadows, and governed by the delicate, ethereal fancies, the subtile caprices of the individual mind. Such find their congenial literary aliment either in works of pure fiction, or in those affording wide scope for the imaginative faculties. To one or the other of these schools may be referred nearly or quite all our existing literary tastes, so far as they bear the impress of nationality, and in each of them we find, among the names of long-acknowledged cele-

brity, not a few of those who are still in the early freshness of their powers.

But the two favorite vehicles alike for the communication and formation of the young American's literary taste, are, oratory, and the periodical publication, using the terms in their Americanized sense, understanding by the former the oral address of public assemblies in the church, the lecture-room, the court-house, at the political meeting or the festive gathering, and by the latter the written address to a public to some extent of ascertained numbers and sentiment though the regular and recognized medium of the review, the magazine or the newspaper. We have said that we used these terms in their Americanized sense, and that because although the names of the things are common, the things themselves, as here existent, have a character of their own. Few, save those of native birth, can comprehend the singular magic of the spoken word, the face to face address for an American audience; everywhere, indeed, the peculiar power of speech is practically seen and felt, but here it is especially potent; we are fond of asking the why and the wherefore, we require to know the rationale of every subject presented, and woe be to him who cannot instantly and off-hand satisfy the inquirer; we meet on an equal footing, and have many experiences in common, concerning which we must compare notes and interchange opi



nions. We have, moreover, an hereditary proneness to the exercise of the tongue, a *cacoethes loquendi*, which the resources of typographical art seem rather to encourage than to repress;—a larger number, indeed, is often brought within reach of the popular orator by means of the eye than by the ear. All these modes of address have become institutional; they are ingrafted upon the habits, and inwoven with the life of our people.

The periodical, also, whether the oracular review, the lighter and less pretentious magazine, or the gazette, devoted to the topics of the day, exhibits distinctive national characteristics. Thousands, who find neither time nor inclination for continuous and systematic reading, as well as most of those who do, desire to place themselves thoroughly *en rapport* with the sayings and doings of the world; extended business interests are more or less identified with the rapid and easy dissemination of intelligence, and the trade of politics as at present pursued would languish and decline without the aid thus afforded. Wants such as these have created the American newspaper, and whatever may be said of our ignorance of the art of journalizing, we may congratulate ourselves on the possession of abundant materials, and ample facilities for future improvement. Magazine literature, though injuriously affected, and its standard of excellence lowered by the amount of literary capital bestowed upon the

public journals, their number and cheapness, and also by the attempted monopoly of the higher order of talent by the review, has of late acquired a higher tone, and afforded employment for the ablest pens. Of the different kinds of periodical literature the review is perhaps the least affected by national idiosyncrasies; the science of criticism is little modified by difference of situation and circumstance, and a certain similarity of mental endowment is usually observable among those who have applied themselves to this department of letters.

It needs but little acquaintance with the condition, character, habits of thought and intellectual status of the young men of America, to understand how and why it is that the use of these channels of communication between the individual and the public is especially congenial, at once meeting special proclivities and capabilities, and moulding them into certain characteristic and unmistakable shapes. The number of young men who incline to launch in solitary state their personal ventures upon the sea of authorship is not large, but where shall we find the American who has not, during the period of adolescence, held forth at the club, the caucus or the lyceum, or made his *débüt* in the newspaper or the magazine, to say nothing of the young and popular orators of the pulpit and the forum? It is apparent that the literary tastes, not only of its younger members, but of the

whole community, are to a considerable extent in process of development, in obedience to influences emanating from the sources named. For the character of these tastes those gifted with the power to carry into captivity the minds of hearers or readers must hold themselves largely accountable. Plentiful as are the pure and elevated models, both native and foreign, it must be remembered that they are not, as a general thing, thrust into the pathway of daily and ordinary experience, while low and vitiated propensities, in literature as well as in ethics, seem to be almost self-supplied with suitable food. There are certain dangers, both literary and moral, inherent in the very nature of these favorite modes of gratifying the intellectual cravings of our countrymen. The gift of eloquence is not so universal, nor its criteria so generally understood, that the pompous declaimer, the flowery rhetorician, may not sometimes usurp the functions, and purloin the honors of the really eloquent man; "the pen of the ready writer" is not always the instrument either of present satisfaction to the judicious and reflective, or the source of permanent and essential benefit. One hand busied in petty and trivial occupations, the other grasping the skirts of great designs, and laboring at the wheels of empire,—the thoughts now given to little cares and necessary duties, and anon bounding upward to the con-



temptation of lofty and magnificent destinies,—the circumstances of our national condition have made us amenable for grave offences in our schools, both of literary and oratorical effort, which call loudly for reform. It is to be feared that we cannot always plead their ignorant or involuntary commission, or, worse yet, that their evil effect is limited to corrupted *literary* tastes. Of our books, magazines, and speeches, those which entail upon us in the reading or the hearing, to say the least, a sad waste of time, are almost innumerable, and little else than the open or secret insinuation of mental and moral poison is to be reckoned as the object and result of many more.

To her young men our country appeals for the remedy of what is here amiss. Their post is in the foremost rank, they and those who are growing up to fill their places will soon constitute the entire force of masculine workers in the field of American letters. To them knowledge has opened wide her portals,—the past is rich with noble incentives and exemplars, and the present gladdened, indeed, with the earnest of better things; all that education, culture, the largest opportunities can give are theirs, and society awaits them with a smile of encouragement and hopeful expectation. We cannot doubt of their prompt, unanimous, and hearty response to the call; in truth, much has already been accomplished, and a little self-complacency seems almost pardonable in view of the

assistance which they have rendered in elevating the nation to its present enviable position in many departments of literature; progress in these, however, as well as in her other legitimate walks, must continue to be their aim, avoiding, on the one hand, undue partiality for, and on the other, hasty and dogmatic condemnation of any. He, for instance, who, in view of the manifold absurdities, incongruities, and evil influences which have gathered about the modern novel, hurls his indiscriminate anathemas against all works of fiction, and even against fictitious writing in the abstract, is arguing down a law of our nature, and enunciating a proposition which carried out to a full and consistent development would rob us of a large portion of the accumulated intellectual treasures of all nations and languages, would sweep away nine-tenths of the poetic wealth of every age and people, and blot out from our own literature no inconsiderable portions of holy writ, the dramas of Shakespeare, the immortal narratives of Bunyan and Defoe, with hosts of other names almost equally endeared. A wider and juster comprehension of the human organism would dictate a wiser course of action; it would recognize in fiction an enginery for good of incalculable power, and in the taste for it a divinely implanted faculty to be carefully trained and directed, not stupidly thwarted and opposed; it would go further, down even to the fundamental truth

underlying all fiction, the truth to which fiction is perpetually holding out a helping hand, the truth which in our present blindness and ignorance we call impossible,—as indeed under certain given conditions it is,—and for loyalty to which fiction is covered with ignominy and dishonor.

The much-vexed topics of a “national literature” and a “national art,” so-called, and the duties, present and prospective, of the young men of the country in its construction and preservation, is one which challenges our attention, though it can here receive but a brief and inadequate discussion.

To stamp a character upon any or all the departments of art, of science, or of literature; to mould and fashion them in forms which shall be at once excellent and idiomatic, appeals perhaps even more strongly to the pride of nations than to that of individuals. The credit resulting from such achievements in the former case is of that convenient kind which is capable of almost indefinite subdivision, and which establishes a sort of brotherhood between the poet, the artist, the philosopher, and him who, unambitious and hopeless of personal distinction, can call them countrymen. We may style the feeling vanity, or a generalized egotism if we please, but we must admit its results to be happy and honorable in the main; it is the frequent parent of patient effort, it



sweetens the pleasure of success while adding to the mortification of failure ; it quickens the sense of beauty and the appreciation of talent ; it knits closer and firmer the spirit and the substance of patriotism ; it mingles its subtle stimulus with the more selfish incentives of the man of genius, bidding him identify his country's glories with his own, honoring him in her, and her in him.

But there are serious errors into which this patriotic sentiment is apt to lead us, among which may be named the mistake of believing catholic and immutable principles capable of change and localization, and of overlooking some of the primary conditions upon which truth and beauty have consented to dwell among us ; of forgetting that the processes of artistic, scientific and literary development move onward in obedience to fixed and uniform laws, the subjects and conditions of whose operation are alterable, but not the laws themselves. Neither may we attempt to accelerate the wise delays and prudent reticence of nature, seeking to shake the ripened fruit from blossoming trees, in disregard of the truth which history everywhere teaches, that characteristic eminence in science, art, or literature is usually among the last and proudest of national triumphs. Religion, laws, commerce, language, climate, productions, a thousand circumstances, fix at the outset their distinguishing imprint upon a nation, but her purely intellec-

tual trophies are later won, they are the tokens of maturing and culminating greatness, they are sometimes, alas ! the precursors or the companions of decay.

There are those, however, who, admitting the general truth of this, maintain that with us the case is different ; we have inherited, say they, the accumulated results of time : we have entered into the labors of those who have preceded us, and started upon our career in many respects the equals if not the superiors of our contemporaries in other lands. Let us approve ourselves among the nations a power entitled to the same rank in letters and arts, which we have already secured in the various fields of practical effort ; let us reflect the phenomena of our social, political, religious, and domestic life in new theories and schools of æsthetic culture.

In appeals like these, which the ambitious and hopeful heart of youth is wont to urge with especial zeal, and which are reiterated with similar persistency from divers quarters, truth and fallacy are blended in a manner which renders their separation a delicate and difficult task. While it is undeniable that whatever of literary, artistic, or scientific reputation has been gained by any people has, in a certain sense, been born of circumstances peculiar to it as a nation, and is representative of some traits of national character, it is equally true that this reputation is due to the strict and faithful

observance of rules which are of universal and perpetual obligation, and to the diligent use of means and materials which antecedent experience supplies. The close connection and succession thus established between the different periods and kindreds of the world's history is especially noticeable in the fine arts; the great object of each of these being the expression of the beautiful, and the excitation of lofty or pleasurable ideas, it is obvious that all other purposes must be wholly subordinate and subsidiary, and that such naturalization as each may receive comes only from the slow infiltration and infusion of a nation's interior life and character, and not from any dry, mechanical and sudden reproduction of its exterior phases. Such a process, moreover, presupposes a susceptibility to, and appreciation of the beautiful, and this again implies wealth, leisure, taste, and an acquaintance more or less thorough with the canons of critical science. The vast variety and extent of our natural scenery, embracing forests verdant with the livery of summer, or glowing with the rainbow hues of autumn; interminable plains; majestic rivers and mountains; the song of birds; the harmonies of the cataract and of the wind-swept forest; the graceful elegance or massive grandeur seen in the shape of tree, rock, animal, and flower; the innumerable beauties of sight, sound, and color lavished with such profusion on every side had awakened the admira-



tion and stimulated the rude mimicry of the savage for ages before the civilized man who supplanted him had commenced developing the butterfly of art from the chrysalis of imitation; but it is only in so far as he proves his right to the name that the *artist* must expect his countrymen to forget, over his Niagaras, his dying Indians, his American epics or operas, the treasures of an older culture and a larger experience; to do otherwise would be no less an injustice to themselves than to him, an injustice which finds, perhaps, its only parallel in the ignorance or prejudice which ignores as being of native growth those budding artistic powers and faculties which require for their fruitage the tempered rays of a judicious and discriminating encouragement.

Recollecting that the methods and aims of literature are often coincident with, though not always limited by those of art, much of what has been said may be found applicable to the former as well as to the latter. The important difference, however, immediately suggests itself that for the purely ideal symbolism of art is here substituted a written or spoken language as the medium of expression; language thus becomes the primary and natural point of distinction between the literature of different nations, so that, in one sense, a civilized people which possesses a language, possesses also a literature of its own. Our own country, however, presents the ano-

malous spectacle of a large and independent nation whose language is identical with that of another nation wholly distinct and separate from it ; the immediate inference from this simple fact is, that there must, of necessity, be a connection of some sort between the literature of the two ; and if we add to these premises, that the younger nation is an offshoot from the older, with similar religion, laws, habits, and customs ; that a close and constant intercourse exists ; that a good understanding and acts of international courtesy and kindness are gradually but surely taking the place of hostility, jealousies, and injuries, it is at once apparent that we have very materially narrowed the basis on which to erect what can be styled a national literature. In what sense, then, may such an achievement be deemed practicable ; what may be regarded as the present or probable future characteristics of a distinctive American literature ?

Our reply to this question is perhaps anticipated in what has already been said. As we see in the face of the child first the likeness to that of the parent, and afterwards detect the points of difference which go to make up the individuality of the countenance, so may we observe in our literature of native origin so many traces and indications of family likeness to that of the mother country, that its idiosyncracies are brought into view by being projected, as it were, upon this back-

ground. Setting aside the numerous tribe of direct imitators of popular English authors, we find an involuntary harmony of thought and feeling, and not unfrequently a pointed resemblance of style and expression between our own writers and those of Great Britain, while with all this is mingled so much that is purely and thoroughly American, as almost always to impart an unmistakable character to the literature emanating from this side the water. The most noticeable differences exist, perhaps, in our prose works of fiction. The tale or story has always been one of the earliest forms in which the literary genius of a people has developed; drawing its inspiration chiefly from the objects and circumstances under the immediate knowledge and observation of the narrator, and dealing with every-day habits and occurrences, it reproduces for us the life and manners of the time with a kind of photographic fidelity. Our own fictitious literature forms no exception to the rule; based for the most part upon events of historical or traditionary interest, or illustrative of social, religious, political, or domestic institutions and peculiarities, it is indebted comparatively little to that of any other country, and with all its defects, its sins of omission and commission, its graver and its lighter errors, must be admitted to afford an interesting picture of national traits and institutions, and to constitute, at present, the most strictly national department of our lite-



rature. It is a favorite, moreover, with a large class of young writers, and a still larger class of young readers, and is exerting a perceptible influence on the tastes and morals of the rising generation: that it should have hitherto been cultivated less as an art, than as a mere literary recreation for fame, or pecuniary emolument, or a convenient instrumentality in promoting the purposes of philanthropy and reform, is unfortunate in every point of view, for the last-named objects are not only wholly consistent with the former, but are more or less dependent upon it for their complete accomplishment. A want of due regard to "the unities," to the recognized rules of construction and development, to the just and harmonious arrangement of plot and incident, are prominent faults in our novels,—faults which are even more conspicuous in other departments of the belles-lettres, especially in our longer and more elaborate poems—while it is difficult to imagine any class of compositions more redolent with the peculiar aroma of the American mind than much of the lyric and descriptive poetry which has so skilfully and beautifully transfigured with the immortalizing touch of art the more common and familiar scenes, thoughts, traditions, and circumstances of our daily life. Such nationality as our literature may fairly claim, must, we think, be chiefly sought in the works of our novelists and poets.

We have attempted to set forth some of the reasons why, in the more ordinary acceptation of the phrase, a strictly national art or literature is, for us, simply an impossibility. There is, however, another, and, as we think, a higher and better use of these terms than any which is predicated upon mere political or geographical distinctions, a use which is based upon a recognition of the great fact of community of race and language, and an enlightened perception of the results accruing therefrom. It is in this view that the intellectual greatness of the mother land, and especially her literary trophies, are seen to be so closely incorporated with ours, and ours with hers, as to form a single, homogeneous, indissoluble whole, a monument on which are inscribed names native to either hemisphere, colossal in its proportions, and perpetually towering upward with fresh accretions from among those who, in every quarter of the globe, speak one language, and trace a common lineage and history. Though the charters of our civil liberties date from a period within the memory of living men, we are yet heirs in direct descent of an intellectual franchise of an unknown antiquity; voluntarily to renounce our share in so rich an inheritance, to imagine that anterior to, and beyond the limits of our political organization, we have neither right nor interest in such ancestral dignities as these, is wholly foreign to a spirit of wise and

liberal patriotism. We ought rather to rejoice that to us has been committed the increase and preservation of so priceless a deposit, that we, the youngest in the family of nations, possess a literature contemporary in origin with the earliest word of independent thought and speech in a living tongue, and embodying from that day to the present the best and fullest results of the Anglo-Saxon mind in every period of its development. It is not easy to imagine the young American coolly and deliberately turning his back upon these long-gathered treasures, to gloat over the few pence which his own countrymen have added to the overflowing coffers, nor is there, we may be assured, any real ground for such an apprehension; duty and interest rightly understood, combine in recommending a very different course; the voice of conscience and of an enlightened public sentiment do not cease to remind him that, in this respect at least, the character of the miser may be worthily assumed and enacted.

The circle of the arts and sciences has been trodden with diligence and success by the feet of American youth. The cultivation of the fine arts, if at times chilled and discouraged by the nipping frosts of utilitarian zeal, has nevertheless commanded the devotion of a rare and varied genius which has left no despicable evidences of its quality. A more general attention and a more decided impulse has, however, been given to those arts



which minister directly to the necessities and conveniences of life, which under the name of practical arts, or applied sciences, are the objects of a characteristically earnest pursuit, a pursuit in which the energies of our young men are largely enlisted. It is truly wonderful to one who pauses to reflect on the matter, how entire and absolute has been the change effected in our domestic and social economy, in all the common surroundings of daily experience, by the mastery of the mind over the inert inanimate forces of nature, and how steadily and constantly invention follows invention, and improvement improvement. The conviction grows upon us that it is by special providential appointment that our vast national domain and untold resources should have been allotted to a people so admirably fitted to turn them to account. It is in connection with other occupations of this kind that some of the most prominent and well-developed traits of American character, especially in early life, are brought to our notice.

Less eminence has been attained in the department of the so-called abstract sciences, although an excellent foundation is laid for their future culture. Utilitarian doctrines are more or less at war with the bestowal of time and talent upon anything from which no immediate and palpable advantages are to accrue. Not so, however, with regard to the natural sciences: these are wisely and

carefully studied, as well for the mere gratification of scientific tastes, as for their practical bearing on human interests. An almost illimitable field of investigation spreads its tempting marvels before the young inquirer; around him is a mighty continent whereon to read the records of geology, to explore and chronicle the phenomena of vegetable life, to study the habits and structure of the whole animate and inanimate creation which it shows him. Within the boundaries of his own land are gathered the divers products of many climes; the frozen north and the regions of perpetual summer alike are his, and his for all the great and beneficent purposes of science are their precious and manifold treasures. Nor has the substantial and timely encouragement of private patronage or governmental aid been wanting. Witness the noble endowments, and wise liberality of individuals, not only of the wealthy, but also of the intelligent and public-spirited possessors of a competency, or even less, a liberality which has both increased the active usefulness of the learned and taken thought for the young and struggling learner; witness the laudable and far-sighted policy of our rulers in the establishment of scientific institutions, and the prosecution of expeditions of discovery, explorations and investigations, honorable and beneficial alike to the country, to science, and to the parties concerned in them.

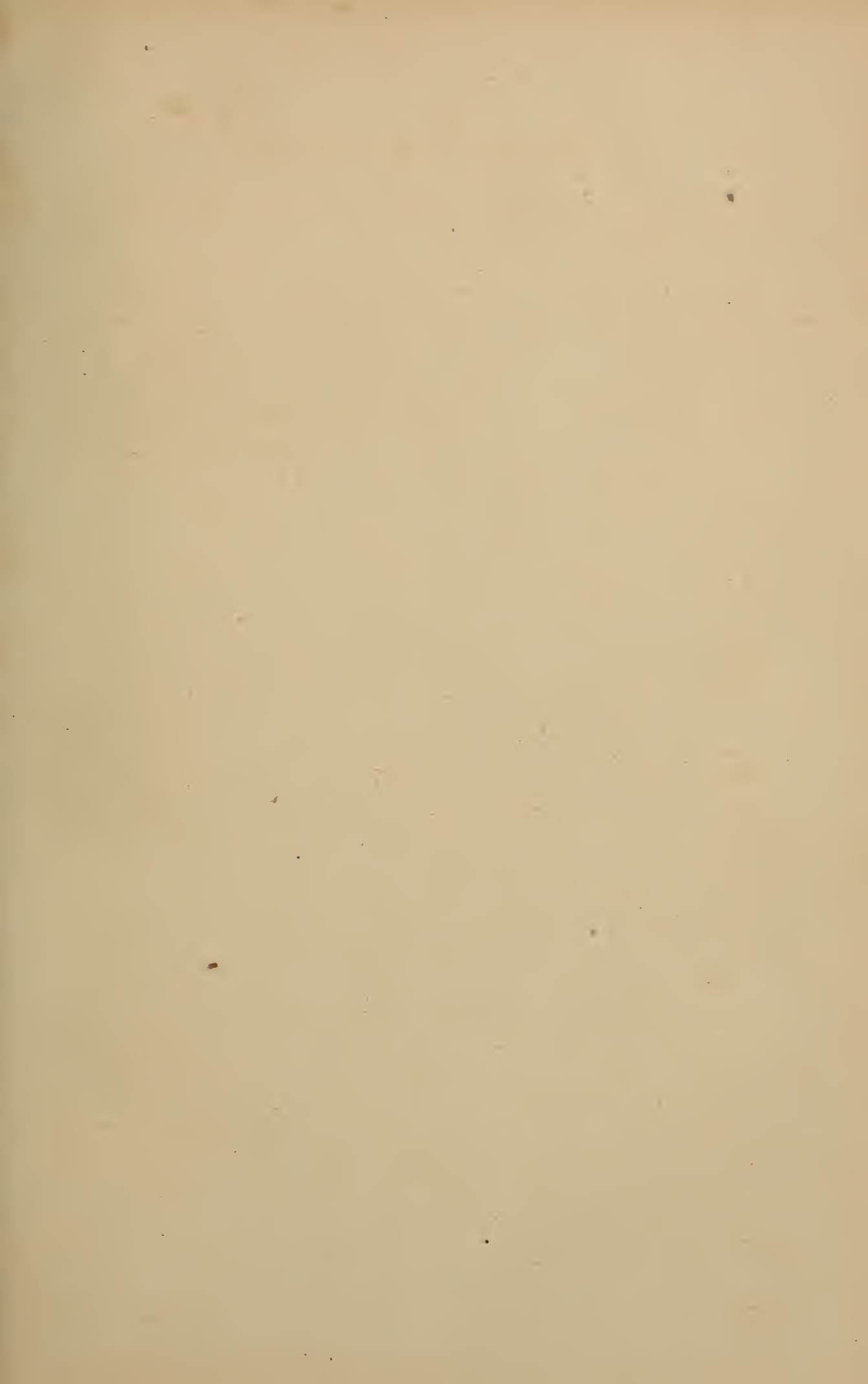
The young man—the new world! what deep-fraught

words are these,—what hidden depths of meaning are contained in the few short syllables which glide so easily from the tongue or from the pen ! The human race has for ages been passing through the slow, troublous, and diversified processes which history discloses—"the long results of time" have patiently gathered themselves together, and poured their rich accumulations into the lap of Western civilization, in order that youth might stand at last enfranchised with its inborn rights, delivered from superstitious restraints and conventionalisms, and restored to its true place and functions. The means and opportunities for such a consummation are ample ; every facility for mental and moral improvement, unnumbered avenues of honorable and profitable employment, a community not simply welcoming, but, as it were, commanding his aid,—these are the incentives from without, while within there lives the consciousness of the lofty part which has been assigned for his performance, and a quickening sense of powers well-disciplined for the encounters awaiting them.

We are taught by observation, by analogy, and by reflection, to anticipate a distant, but surely approaching, period at which our own nation, having, like others, passed through the successive epochs of its rise and culmination, shall be gradually and irresistibly impelled toward the fatal brink of disaster and overthrow. Of each and every stage of this progress, young men will be

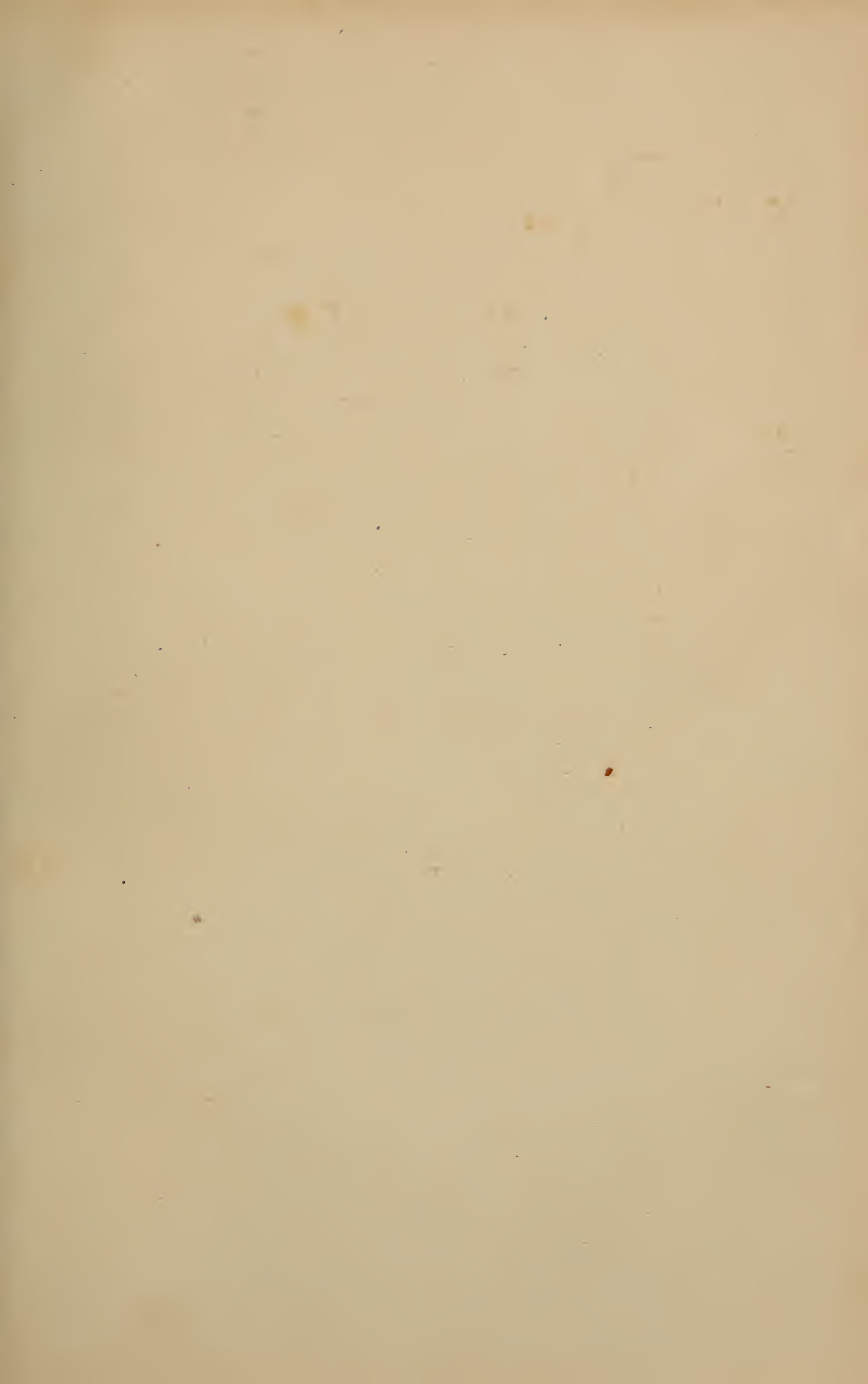


something more than the mere spectators; from us who march to-day at the side of a political parent in the first flush of manly vigor, to those who shall support and guide his decrepit steps, the long line stretches out into the unknown future, a pervading and vitalizing force, a power directly or indirectly felt in every portion of the body politic,—like the fresh, sustaining juices which robe the oak with perennial strength and verdure, imparting life and nourishment alike to the tender sapling, and to the defiant monarch of the forest. The fair tree of our country, scion of a noble stock, well planted upon a congenial and nutritious soil, watered by the dews of constitutional order, and cheered by the benignant sunshine of prosperous fortune, must draw up into every fibre and tissue the rich and wholesome sap which is the product of such influences as these. Young men of America! let this current preserve evermore its steady, vivifying flow, neither vitiated by crude, immature, unassimilated matter, nor volatilized by those fierce and fiery particles which stimulate rather than strengthen. If, in the pathway of this noble purpose, you are destined to fulfil the prophecy, “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail,” let it with equal truth, be added of you and of others, that “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint!”





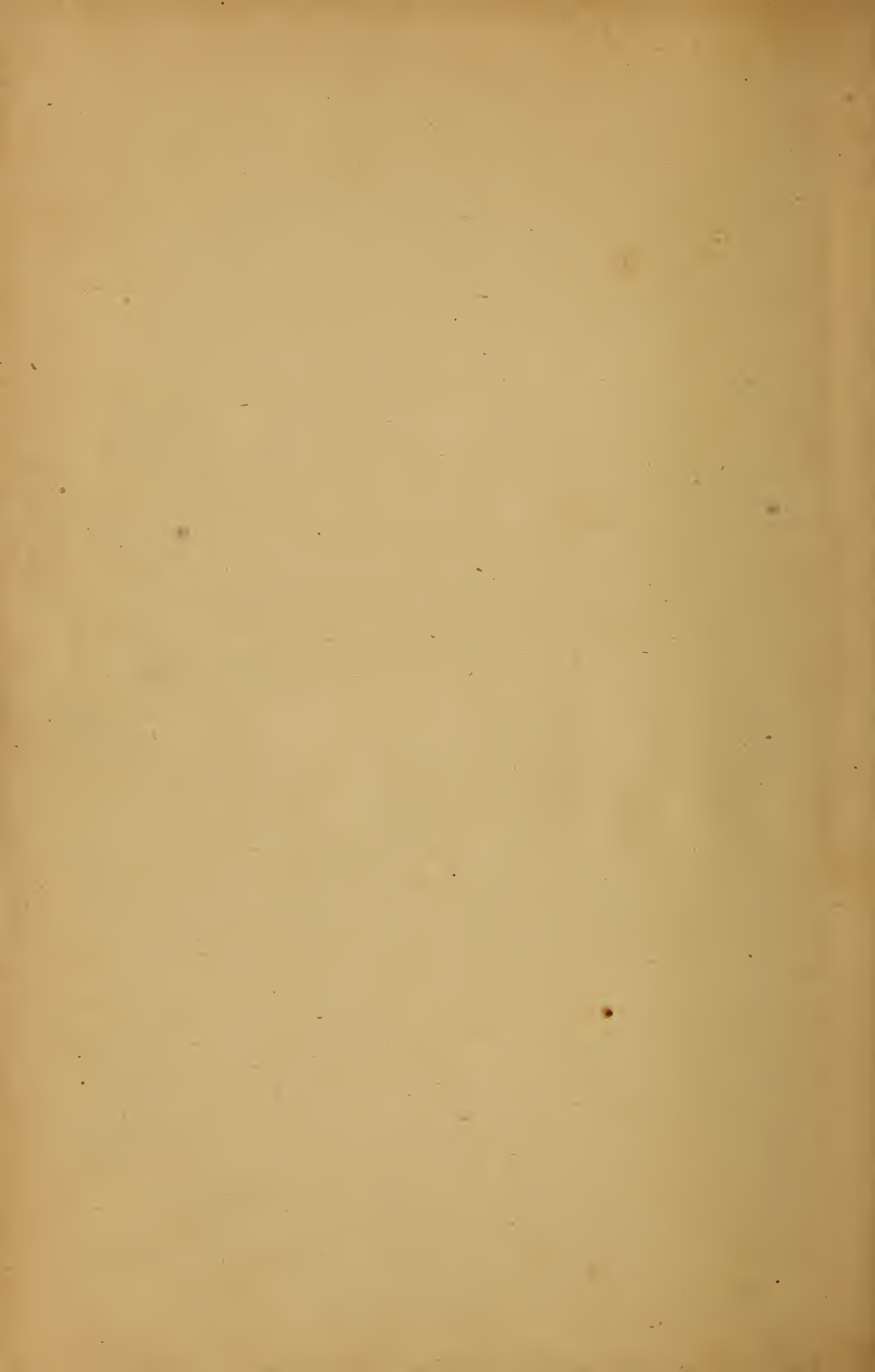








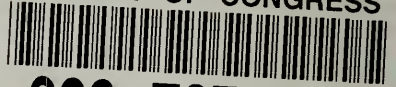








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